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ABSTRACT

Teachers must be trained to recognize and meet student needs that have evolved through societal changes. At present, children are given too much factual knowledge without the emotional background necessary to cope with and use the knowledge. They must be given the opportunity to want to learn without having knowledge thrust upon them at an early age. The role of the teacher changed during this century from source of knowledge to programmer of knowledge. The teacher is expected to fulfill a wide variety of capacities in professional as well as in personal areas of child development. To meet the needs of the students, teachers must be trained to cope with reality. Qualities and characteristics that should be fostered in teachers for the future include flexibility, maturity, intelligence, and stability. An assertive effort to upgrade the professional image and skills of teachers must be made. (FG)

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THE TEACHER'S ROLE REFLECTS THE NEEDS OF THE STUDENTS

by

Dr. Becky Fisher

If teachers are to teach effectively, they must be able to diagnose, and then meet, the needs of their students. However, the needs of the students are constantly changing. They seem to have changed faster now than in the past and quite likely will change even more rapidly in the future.

Let us take a glance into the past. In rural America, about 25 to 30 years ago, we had students in predominately one-room schools. We gave them individualized instruction, let them learn at their own pace. There were some larger schools in urban areas, and the instruction was more regemented there. Most of the students proceeded at about the same pace.

What was the image of the teacher? In the early days teachers were "spinsters", "old maids", the typical "School Marm", "Icabod Crane", etc. The school teacher was not the "normal person". They were awarded the distinction of being a bit eccentric.

As urban areas grew and transportation became easier we consolidated schools and the remaining one-room schools became the exception rather than the rule.

With the advent of Sputnik, which spurred technological advances, and with the advent of television in every home, factual information became immediately available. Shows for children such as Sesame Street, and The Electric Company, provided factual information at an early age for children. But the manner in which the information was provided was such that the receiver was completely passive. The child did not have to respond to the television teacher in any way.

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Changes which can be attributed to television over the past 20 years, according to my own abservations:

Then	Now
First grade was the introduction of reading and writing.	Kindergarteners are now reading on the equivalent of what was once third and fourth grade levels.
Kindergarten was a social adjustment.	Kindergarten is now what first and second grade used to be. Children in first and second grades are now studying what they used to in the middle grades. They are much more sophisticated. They can quote facts about space shuttles, geography, parts of speech, and social life. But do they really understand the relevancy of these facts?
School was a new world, a new experience, for the young child.	Now when a child enters kindergarten or first grade, it is nothing new. They have been in Head Start, day care centers, etc., due to the fact that many mothers must go out to work.
Young people in junior high and high school were eager to begin to enter the world of the adult. Puberty did not arrive until about middle teens.	Many junior high and high school students now seem bored and burned out. Puberty is now coming as early as ten or eleven years old. They have been exposed to all the variables of adult life for many years.

Another effect on the early maturation of children is the change in home life. More and more children are living with single parent families. More and more mothers are seeking careers, and the children are sent to day care centers, or their equavalent.

We must train our teachers to recognize and meet these needs caused by the changes in our society.

Some of the current changes in children are brought about by the kinds of pressures our society levels on them. We give them too much emphasis, too early, on the concept of productive "work".

We lead them to believe that they must achieve, they must accomplish. We do not allow them time to be infants, and young children. We do not allow them a long enough period of time to imagine, to fantasize, to pretend. We present facts, and stress the memorization of these facts.

We give them too much factual learning, too early, without supplying them with the emotional background needed to cope with and use the knowledge. We do not create the need and desire to know, before we innundate them with facts. We do not give them the opportunity to want to know these facts.

As a result of all the factual learning without an emotional base, we foster too much competition in the modern world. We might compare our children to a contestant on a quiz show. He can spew out answers without any one of them necessarily being related to any other. Only the prize counts, not the knowledge itself.

How do we teach problem solving? Television teaches it for us. It teaches that in 20 or 30 or 60 minutes almost any problem can be solved. Commercials teach quite effectively that problems can be solved by the correct use of specific products. Children are learning that you do not have to live with problems or take perhaps many years to solve some problems. Television tells them that they should be able to solve them quite quickly. Everything is individualized with no group identity.

Television and its cousin, computerized learning, has also put the emphasis on the individual as such, instead of on the individual as part of a group. Instead of working with other people, children can now work alone on a program already set up in advance. This fosters concentration of one's own needs without learning how to recognize, and deal with the needs of other people. "How does the fulfillment of my needs affect others?"

By the time they reach junior high school, many of these children are "burned out". They are bored with life and learning. They are perhaps looking for the

imagination and ingenuity which they missed in early childhood in a vacuum. More adolescents turn to drugs, alcohol, and are involved in psychotherapy and counseling. If they approach normal, they are "burned out" in school.

How do we go about meeting these needs? Let us look first at the old stereotype of the teacher. She was the fount of all knowledge. She,(sometimes, he,) was respected as a scholar. Now, the teacher is a programmer of knowledge. She is now a babysitter, in the eyes of many people, while television and computer assisted instruction disseminates the facts. The teacher has become, in many cases, a surrogate parent to younger children. Since both parents work, the child has become a television addicted loner.

Grandparents or other relatives may live hundreds of miles away. They no longer have access to the extended family. No easy access to Grandma or Grandpa except by phone. They seem to be lacking much human comfort and contact that was once provided by the extended family. The teacher is now expected to provide a certain amount of this.

In order to meet the needs of the modern student, the modern teacher must be; baby sitter, parent, family, role model for everyone, researcher, curriculum developer and designer, scholar, social scientist, politician, etc. She is expected to give each child a hard-tailored education, be multidemensional, dessiminate and explain facts, counsel on personal problems, give advice on career preparation, etc.

What are the implications for teacher educators? We must train teachers to use a wide variety of resources. We must train them to use the audio-visual technology, the computer based instruction, the school and public library, social resources, psychiatric resources, etc. to help meet the needs of the students.

We must train our teachers to help foster independency in what is growing to be a highly technological society. We must not lose the individual in a maze of technology. The individual and his emotional, and social development is as essential

as his accmulation of facts. We must teach our teachers to use technology and not to become lost in it or solely dependent on it for education.

We must teach our teachers to cope with the world the way it is, and not the way we would like for it to be. We must face the fact that we must deal with the effects that the modern world has on children. Teachers must be taught to grow ahead of the challenges brought about by environmental changes and not to be overwhelmed by them. Changes will come about even faster in the years to come.

Our teachers must be flexible, continue in-service education in order to keep ahead of rapid changes. Teachers must help form the challenges of the modern world and not be formed by it.

We need to help constantly, to reform the image of the teacher. We must be prepared for social changes and work with them. We need to erase the old image of "them what can does, and them what can't teaches."

With teachers almost taking over the raising of the child, (in many cases a few months after birth,) and continuing to be a persuasive factor through puberty, we need teachers who are flexible, intelligent, mature, knowledgable. The teacher is becoming an increasingly important figure in a child's life.

Modern technology may foster the idea of an educational assembly line and common criteria for each student. But we are not working with inanimate objects. We are working with living, thinking, feeling, growning, human beings.

Summary: What do we need to emphasize in our efforts to train teachers to meet the needs of students of the future?

1. Teachers must be secure, stable people.
2. They must be able to invite, and profit from, criticism.
3. They must be concerned about, and work with, the present problems of life: morality, war and peace, economics, politics, etc.
4. They must genuinely love children and the profession.

5. They must be compassionate.
6. They must have, or develop a good sense of humor.
7. They must keep up with in-service classes in keeping current.
8. We need to foster more professional strength such as lawyers and doctors do.
9. They must study, support, and deal with the culture in which they live.
10. We must encourage reciprocity between the school and community.
11. Children must be trained to be able to solve problems with which they will constantly be bombarded in life.

Education is the sculptor of the future. We must be realistic, but also a touch of the idealistic. We must up-grade the profession, not passively, but assertively. We must train our teachers to deal with a computerized technological society and still maintain humanity. We as teacher educators, are training the sculptors of society who will in turn help shape the lives of their students. The classroom is our studio.